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Department
for Work &
Pensions

Research and analysis

DWP Customer Experience Survey for the Child Maintenance Service 2025 to 2026

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Applies to England, Scotland and Wales

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The Customer Experience Survey (CES) is designed to monitor customer satisfaction with the services offered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to inform improvements in service delivery. It is an ongoing cross-sectional study with quarterly interviewing. This research was externally commissioned by DWP with fieldwork independently conducted by IFF Research.

The data in this report is based on 2,313 surveys conducted with Child Maintenance Service (CMS) customers. This report presents data on overall customer experience and looks at survey data that is mapped to the DWP Customer Experience Drivers. The DWP Customer Experience Drivers provide standards against which customer service delivery can be measured. This report includes data relating to:

- Ease of Use
- Get it Right
- Professional and Supportive
- Communicate Clearly
- Trusted

Our thanks go to all those who gave up their time to take part in this study.

About the Child Maintenance Service

CMS helps separated families to make financial choices to provide for their children when needed. Child maintenance is an arrangement between parents to cover the child's living costs when one parent no longer lives with them. Parents use CMS to arrange child maintenance if they do not want to contact the other

parent themselves, and many have tried family-based arrangements before deciding to use CMS. CMS is unique in that there are two customers for each case (a Receiving Parent and a Paying Parent), often with an opposing position about their maintenance arrangement. This means that, in many instances, when a positive result for one customer is achieved, the other customer may be less satisfied.

At a glance

Agreement that CMS is easy to use

Nearly half of CMS customers agreed the service was easy to use

[Change to chart view](#)

Response	%
Agree	49%
Disagree	47%
Don't Know	4%

Agreement that CMS provided a satisfactory service

Over four out of ten CMS customers agreed CMS provided a satisfactory service

[Change to chart view](#)

Response	%
Agree	43%
Disagree	57%

About the survey

Survey methodology

Changes to Child Maintenance Service Customer Experience Survey

There have been methodological changes to the CMS CES, meaning that CMS's results are not directly comparable to previous publications. Primarily, these changes include a revised questionnaire and an amended approach to sampling. A further change is the addition of a new headline question from the Ease of Use

Customer Experience Driver: “It is easy to use CMS”.

Sample

Each quarter, CMS CES surveys a random sample of all CMS customers. The sample captures a broader group of CMS customers than previously and now includes parents who have been in contact with the service for any reason as well as those who may not have had any recent contact at all. This means respondents to the CMS CES are drawn from a much larger group of customers, which is no longer comparable to those in previous publications.

A quota sample design is used to meet minimum interview targets for each parent type, with a random sample of CMS customers drawn from the population to meet these quotas. Weighting is then applied to the data so that findings are representative of the survey population: data is weighted by age, gender, claim length and whether contact and any following actions were automated or not (i.e. completed entirely digitally).

Questionnaire

Due to extensive revision of the CMS CES questionnaire, question wording no longer remains comparable to previous publications, nor does the audience for each question. Some questions that are similar to those in previous publications have been realigned to more appropriate Customer Experience Drivers.

Most of the questions within CMS CES are closed questions, typically utilising a four-point scale for agreement (i.e. strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). Don't Know and Not Applicable options are also provided where appropriate.

Data is also collected on Digital Propensity, as well as customer characteristics including:

- Long term health conditions

- Ethnicity
- Employment
- Education

Fieldwork

The survey is administered using a mixed-mode online and telephone data collection approach. In 2025 to 2026, fieldwork was conducted quarterly. The data in this report is based on 2,313 surveys conducted with CMS customers who had at least one live CMS case, or one that was closed within the quarter's sampling period, between April 2025 and March 2026.

Statistical conventions

All differences between Receiving Parents and Paying Parents are found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, unless stated otherwise. A statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level means that you would only expect to see the result caused by chance 1 in 20 times.

Results for subgroups with larger base sizes will be more robust and have a lower margin of error than those with smaller base sizes. Therefore, it is possible to identify smaller differences as being statistically significant when comparing larger base sizes. Conversely, small base sizes may prevent statistical significance, even if a true difference between groups does exist. This particularly applies to the customer characteristics section, in which the base sizes for some subgroups are relatively small and thus results should be treated with caution.

Overall results

Nearly half of CMS customers thought the services provided by CMS were easy to use

Figure 1: Percentage of customers who agreed it is easy to use CMS

[Change to chart view](#)

Group	2025 to 2026
Overall	49%
Receiving Parent	58%
Paying Parent	40%

Base: All Customers. Overall (2,313); Receiving Parent (1,266); Paying Parent (1,047).

Figure 1 shows that in 2025 to 2026, 49% of CMS customers agreed that CMS was easy to use. This was higher among Receiving Parents, at 58%, compared to 40% of Paying Parents.

Over four in ten CMS customers reported that CMS

provided a satisfactory service

Figure 2: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS provided a satisfactory service

[Change to chart view](#)

Group	2025 to 2026
Overall	43%
Receiving Parent	51%
Paying Parent	35%

Base: All customers (excluding Don't Know responses). Overall (2,230); Receiving Parent (1,224); Paying Parent (1,006).

Figure 2 shows that, overall, 43% of CMS customers agreed that CMS provided a satisfactory service. This was higher among Receiving Parents, at 51%, compared to Paying Parents, at 35%.

Results by Customer Experience Driver

This section of the report is structured around the Customer Experience Drivers:

- Ease of Use
- Get it Right

- Professional and Supportive
- Communicate Clearly
- Trusted

Whilst most questions are asked to all customers, some may only be asked to customers who had contact within a specific timeframe or used particular contact methods; this is to enable robust and reliable results and is indicated in base descriptions.

Ease of Use

Results for the general ease of using CMS question have been reported already in the 'Overall results' section above, as this is a headline question. The remaining question related to the Ease of Use Driver is reported below.

Figure 3: Percentage of CMS customers who said it was easy to use CMS online services

[Change to chart view](#)

Group	2025 to 2026
Overall	56%
Receiving Parent	65%

Paying Parent 46%

Base: All customers (excluding those who reported they do not use CMS online).
Overall (2,173); Receiving Parent (1,206); Paying Parent (967).

Figure 3 shows that, overall, more than half of CMS customers reported that it was easy to use CMS online services (56%). This was more than six out of ten (65%) for Receiving Parents but below half for Paying Parents (46%).

Get it Right

Questions that relate to the Get it Right Driver are reported below.

Figure 4: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Get it Right Driver

[Change to chart view](#)

Measure	Overall	Receiving Parent	Paying Parent
CMS provided clear timescales for required actions to be taken	52%	54%	51%

CMS met timescales they set	46%	48%	44%
CMS provided updates when timescales were not met	38%	41%	34%

Bases: CMS provided me with clear timescales for any required actions to be completed: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,787); Receiving Parent (947); Paying Parent (840). CMS met the timescales they set: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,736); Receiving Parent (922); Paying Parent (814). CMS provided me with progress updates when timescales were not met: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,544); Receiving Parent (817); Paying Parent (727).

Figure 4 shows that more than half of customers agreed CMS provided them with clear timescales for any actions to be taken (52%), whilst those who agreed CMS met the timescales they set was 46%. Differences between parent types were not found to be statistically significant for these two questions. When asked if CMS provided progress updates when timescales were not met, 38% agreed overall.

Figure 5: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Get it Right Driver

[Change to chart view](#)

Measure	Overall	Receiving Parent	Paying Parent
Only need to contact CMS once for the right action to be taken	37%	41%	33%
CMS colleagues provided accurate information	48%	56%	40%

Bases: I only needed to contact CMS once for the right action to be taken: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,725); Receiving Parent (915); Paying Parent (810). CMS colleagues provided accurate information: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,749); Receiving Parent (927); Paying Parent (822).

Figure 5 shows that 37% of customers agreed they only needed to contact CMS once for the right action to be taken, whilst nearly half (48%) agreed that CMS colleagues provided accurate information.

Professional and Supportive

Questions that relate to the Professional and Supportive Driver are reported below.

Figure 6: Percentage of customers who agreed

with key questions related to the Professional and Supportive Driver

[Change to chart view](#)

Measure	Overall	Receiving Parent	Paying Parent
My request was handled professionally	58%	70%	46%
CMS colleagues understood my needs	49%	60%	38%
CMS colleagues took responsibility for my request	45%	54%	36%

Bases: My request was handled professionally: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,716); Receiving Parent (912); Paying Parent (804). CMS colleagues understood my needs: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,718); Receiving Parent (908); Paying Parent (810). CMS colleagues took responsibility for my request: Customers with contact in the last 6 months (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (1,684); Receiving Parent (886); Paying Parent (798).

Figure 6 shows that nearly six out of ten customers (58%) agreed that their request was handled professionally. Nearly half (49%) agreed that CMS colleagues understood their needs and 45% that CMS colleagues took responsibility for their request.

Figure 7: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Professional and Supportive Driver

[Change to chart view](#)

Measure	Overall	Receiving Parent	Paying Parent
CMS treats me with respect	58%	71%	44%
CMS treats me with dignity	56%	70%	41%

Base for both charts: All customers. Overall (2,313); Receiving Parent (1,266); Paying Parent (1,047).

Figure 7 shows that nearly six out of ten customers (58%) agreed that CMS treated them with respect, whilst 56% agreed CMS treated them with dignity.

Communicate Clearly

Questions that relate to the Communicate Clearly Driver are reported below.

Figure 8: Percentage of customers who agreed

with key questions related to the Communicate Clearly Driver

[Change to chart view](#)

Measure	Overall	Receiving Parent	Paying Parent
I understand what's happening with my case	45%	49%	41%
I understand decisions about my case	45%	51%	38%
I understand what to do if circumstances change	72%	80%	63%
CMS communicates clearly with me	49%	54%	43%

Bases: I have a good understanding what's happening/what happened with my case: All customers (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (2,247); Receiving Parent (1,230); Paying Parent (1,017). I have a good understanding of why decisions about my case have been made: All customers (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (2,256); Receiving Parent (1,231); Paying Parent (1,025). I have a good understanding of what I need to do if my circumstances change: All customers (excluding Not Applicable responses). Overall (2,209); Receiving Parent (1,187); Paying Parent (1,022). CMS communicates clearly with me: All customers. Overall (2,313); Receiving Parent (1,266); Paying Parent (1,047).

Figure 8 shows that 45% of customers agreed they understood what was

happening with their case and why decisions about their case had been made, whilst over seven out of ten (72%) agreed they understood what to do if their circumstances changed. Nearly half (49%) of customers agreed that CMS communicates clearly with them.

Figure 9: Percentage of customers who agreed with key questions related to the Communicate Clearly Driver by parent type

[Change to chart view](#)

Measure	Percentage
I understand when to receive a payment	63%
I understand when to make a payment	72%
I understand the payment amount to receive	63%
I understand the payment amount to make	50%

Bases: I have a good understanding of when I am expected to receive a payment: Receiving Parents only (excluding Not Applicable responses): 917. I have a good understanding of when I am expected to make a payment: Paying Parents only (excluding Not Applicable responses): 777. I have a good understanding of the payment amount I am expected to receive: Receiving Parents only (excluding Not Applicable responses): 920. I have a good understanding of the payment amount I am expected to make: Paying Parents

only (excluding Not Applicable responses): 786.

Figure 9 shows that over six in ten (63%) Receiving Parents agreed that they understood when they were due to receive a payment, as well as the amount they were due to receive. For Paying Parents, over seven in ten (72%) agreed they understood when they were due to make a payment, whilst half (50%) agreed they understood the payment amount they were due to make. The differences between Receiving Parents and Paying Parents understanding when to receive/make a payment and the payment amount to receive/make are statistically significant. The first of these is the only time where Paying Parents have given a higher score than Receiving Parents.

Trusted

The question related to the Trusted Driver is reported below.

Figure 10: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS does what it says it will

[Change to chart view](#)

Category	Percentage
Overall	44%
Receiving Parent	46%

Paying Parent 42%

Base: All customers. Overall (2,313); Receiving Parent (1,266); Paying Parent (1,047).

Figure 10 shows that over four in ten customers agreed CMS does what it says it will (44%). For Receiving Parents this was 46% and for Paying Parents 42%. This difference was not found to be statistically significant.

Customer characteristics

The following section explores the ease of using CMS by whether a customer reported having a long-term health condition and by their ethnicity, employment, education, age and gender. It then looks at customers' digital propensity.

In this section, statistical significance is measured in comparison to everyone who took the survey, excluding the relevant group. For example, when measuring the statistical significance of the overall satisfaction of the 16 to 34 age group, we compare it to all others except that age group.

Long-term health conditions: More than half of customers with no health conditions, or only one of either a mental health condition or physical health condition, reported that CMS is easy to use.

Customers with no long-term health conditions (52%), a physical health condition(s) only (53%) or a mental health condition(s) only (51%) all reported

that CMS is easy to use in similar proportions. However, of these, only the result for those reporting no health conditions was statistically significant (higher) when compared to the combined overall score for the remaining four subgroups.

The only other statistically significant comparison was for the prefer not to say subgroup, who reported in lower proportions that CMS was easy to use (33%) when compared to the combined score of the remaining groups – however, due to a lower base size, this should be treated with caution.

A long-term health condition is defined as any physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more, as self-reported by customers responding to the survey.

Figure 11: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS is easy to use, by long-term health condition(s)

[Change to chart view](#)

Health condition category	Percentage
No health condition	52%
Physical health condition(s)	53%
Mental health condition(s)	51%
Both physical and mental health condition(s)	46%

Base: All customers. No health condition (1,296); Physical health condition(s) (202); Mental health condition(s) (358); Both physical and mental health condition(s) (280); Prefer not to say (177).

Ethnicity: Those from an Asian/Asian British background were more likely to report that CMS is easy to use.

Customers identifying as Asian/Asian British were more likely than other ethnic groups to report that CMS is easy to use (65%), which is a statistically significant (higher) result when compared to the overall score of the other subgroups combined. The other statistically significant result, when compared to the combined overall score of the remaining groups, was for those who reported that they would prefer not to state their ethnic background which, at 25%, was the lowest level of agreement of any of the subgroups. These results, however, should be treated with caution because both the Asian/Asian British and prefer not to say subgroups have small base sizes (as do all groups except the White ethnicity group).

Due to a very small base size, the results for those identifying as “Other” ethnicity are not displayed in the chart but are still included in the overall results.

Figure 12: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS is easy to use, by ethnicity

[Change to chart view](#)

Ethnicity	Percentage
Asian/Asian British	65%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	57%
Mixed/Multiple ethnicity	45%
White	50%
Prefer not to say	25%

Base: All customers. White (1,925); Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (121); Asian/Asian British (76); Mixed/Multiple ethnicity (93); Prefer not to say (89).

Employment: Full-time carers and those unemployed and not looking for work were most likely to report CMS is easy to use, whilst those who preferred not to say what their employment status was were least likely.

Over six in ten customers who were unemployed and not looking for work (66%) or full-time carers (62%) agreed CMS is easy to use. These were both statistically significant results when compared to the combined overall score of the other groups. Those who reported that they preferred not to say their employment status were the least likely to agree (34%), which is also statistically significant (lower). However, these results should be treated with caution as all groups except “Employed full-time or part-time” have low base sizes.

Due to very small base sizes, the results for customers who reported being a student/pupil, retired or “Other” are not displayed in the chart but are still included in the overall results.

Figure 13: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS is easy to use, by employment group

[Change to chart view](#)

Employment status	Percentage
Unemployed and not looking for a job	66%
Full-time caring responsibilities	62%
Long-term sick or disabled	52%
Unemployed but looking for a job	51%
Employed full-time or part-time	49%
Employed, but not currently working (e.g. on sick leave, maternity leave)	47%
Self-employed	43%
Prefer not to say	34%

Base: All customers. Unemployed, not looking for a job (70); Full-time carer

(116); Long-term sick/disabled (156); Unemployed, looking for a job (92); Employed full-time or part-time (1,512); Employed but not currently working (48); Self-employed (175); Prefer not to say (102).

Education: Those with no formal education or lower secondary education were more likely to report that CMS is easy to use.

Nearly six in ten (59%) customers with no formal qualifications and over half (56%) of those with lower secondary qualifications reported that CMS is easy to use. Both results were statistically significant (higher) than the combined overall score for the remaining subgroups. Those who said they would prefer not to say were the least likely to agree (34%), which is also statistically significant (lower) compared to the overall score for the remaining subgroups.

Due to low base sizes, scores for the “No formal qualifications” and “Other” groups should be treated with caution.

Figure 14: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS is easy to use, by educational level

[Change to chart view](#)

Education level	Percentage
No formal qualifications	59%
Lower Secondary (e.g. GCSE or O Level, typically at age 16)	56%

Upper Secondary (e.g. A-Level, typically at age 18)	52%
Vocational qualifications	53%
University degree	47%
Other	48%
Prefer not to say	34%

Base: All customers. No formal qualifications (123); Lower Secondary (441); Upper Secondary (290); Vocational qualifications (391); University degree (614); Other (179); Prefer not to say (275).

Age: Customers under the age of 35 were more likely to report that CMS is easy to use, whilst those aged 45 to 54 were less likely.

Six out of ten (60%) of customers aged 16 to 34 reported that CMS is easy to use. This was higher than all other age groups, which is also a statistically significant result when compared to the combined overall score of the remaining groups. The other statistically significant result was for those aged 45 to 54, who were the least likely to agree CMS is easy to use (41%).

Due to very small base sizes, the following age categories were merged to allow reporting: 16 to 24 and 25 to 34; and 55 to 60, 61 to 65 and 66 to 74. The score for the 55+ age group should still be treated with caution due to a lower base size.

Figure 15: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS is easy to use, by age group

[Change to chart view](#)

Age group	Percentage
16-34	60%
35-44	49%
45-54	41%
55+	46%

Base: All customers. 16 to 34 (438); 35 to 44 (980); 45 to 54 (707); 55+ (188).

Gender: Female customers were more likely to report that CMS is easy to use than male customers.

More than half of female customers (56%) reported that CMS is easy to use, whereas just over four out of ten males reported the same (42%). This was a statistically significant difference and reflects the differences between Receiving and Paying Parents, as females are more likely to be the Receiving Parents.

Figure 16: Percentage of customers who agreed that CMS is easy to use, by gender

[Change to chart view](#)

Gender	Percentage
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Male	42%
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Female	56%
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Base: All customers. Male (1,027); Female (1,236). Gender was not recorded for 50 cases, so these customers are excluded from analysis.

Digital propensity

This section explores customers' digital propensity. Digital propensity refers to how much customers use and engage with digital technologies in their daily lives, and their capability to do so.

A large majority of customers reported having access to the internet.

Whilst most CMS customers reported having access to the internet (95%); this was higher amongst Receiving Parents (97%) than Paying Parents (93%).

Figure 17: Percentage of customers who reported having internet access, by parent type

[Change to chart view](#)

Category	2025 to 2026
Overall	95%
Receiving Parent	97%
Paying Parent	93%

Base: All customers. Overall (2,313); Receiving Parent (1,266); Paying Parent (1,047).

Most customers reported that they could use the internet to access government services, if it was available.

Most customers reported that they could have used the internet to access government services, if it was available (86%), although this was higher amongst Receiving Parents (89%) compared to Paying Parents (83%). This difference was driven by more Receiving Parents reporting they could access the internet without help (81%) compared to Paying Parents (76%).

Figure 18: Percentage of customers who could have accessed government services using the internet if it was available, by parent type

Change to chart view

Category	Yes, without help	Yes, with help	Total
Overall	79%	7%	86%
Receiving Parent	81%	8%	89%
Paying Parent	76%	7%	83%

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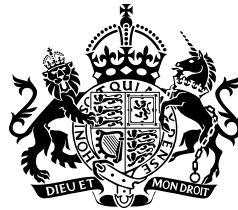
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